

## Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

# Notable Veterinarians of 2013

By Dr. Donald F. Smith  
December 8, 2013

We pause at the end of the year to honor three of the many notable veterinarians and supporters of veterinary medicine who have had an impact on the world of animal and human health in 2013. Where else could we start than with Dr. Steele!

**James H. Steele** – One of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most influential veterinarians and the father of preventive medicine, he was also an early proponent of the connection between human and animal health.



*James H. Steele, DVM, MPH (1913-2013) and his wife, Brigitte*  
(Photo by the author, 2010)

*The New York Times* certainly got it right last month in their substantive obituary tribute to this amazing veterinarian who died recently in his 101<sup>st</sup> year.

*The idea that government could take a systematic approach to fighting disease in animals to protect people did not take hold until the middle of the 20th century, when Dr. Steele led the way.<sup>1</sup>*

Though I learned many things about this daring and valiant man during my three-hour rambling conversation at his home in Houston in 2010,<sup>2</sup> two significant accomplishments stood out. One was manner in which he overcame formidable family challenges during his formative years, before entering veterinary college at Michigan State University. The other was his courageous decision to travel to Boston, following his DVM graduation in 1941, to pursue a MPH at Harvard. The doors that Steele nudged (and occasionally forced) open with the ideas borne from that additional degree changed human medicine and veterinary medicine, in that order.

Dr. James Steele, dead at age 100. In my opinion, the profession's most notable figure of 2013.

**Karen Bradley** – Veterinary practice owner in Vermont, Dr. Bradley asserts, “If it’s raining women, why is it reigning men?” When she was ousted from the position of Chair of the House Advisory Committee (the executive branch of the House of Delegates) at the Chicago meeting of the AVMA, leaving seven men as the residual members of the Committee, many



*Karen Bradley, DVM, Co-owner Onion River Animal Hospital, Middlesex, VT  
Member, AVMA House of Delegates and Past Chair, House Advisory Committee  
(Photo provided by the American Veterinary Medical Association)*

people hung their heads in disappointment, while others lashed out in anger and frustration. AVMA President Doug Aspros summed it up prophetically, “A historic convention, but bad outcomes for the House of Delegates, and great grist for the mill as we advocate for change.”<sup>3</sup>

And change it was! Within four months, those “Five Days in July”<sup>4</sup> had spawned a new web site, Facebook and LinkedIn pages, and catalyzed the development of the ***Women’s Veterinary Leadership Development Initiative***.<sup>5</sup> Spawned by the ideals of education, advocacy, and inclusiveness, rather than by anger and bitterness, Bradley and her colleagues have organized a solid team from a broad cross section of the profession, from students, to early- and mid-career women, to men nearing the ends of their careers.

**Katherine H. Goeppinger** – Chancellor and CEO of Midwestern University’s Glendale campus (Arizona), Dr. Geoppinger is fulfilling her commitment to making veterinary medicine an indispensable component of the medical campus that already includes colleges of osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, optometry and dental health, along with a large number of masters and doctorate programs in the health sciences. The new college, in the fifteenth most populous state in the United States, is recruiting and accepting its inaugural class of veterinary students to matriculate in fall 2014.<sup>6</sup>



*President and CEO Kathleen H. Goeppinger, PhD, with Rudy  
Midwestern University in Glendale, Arizona  
(Photo by Midwestern University)*

Why would she contemplate starting a college of veterinary medicine? “Quite simply,” she told me, “animals contribute to human health and I felt having a health sciences campus without veterinary medicine would be incomplete.” These were bold and declarative words from a woman with a clear vision for the future of one health and the leadership qualities to accomplish the goal. Sometimes it takes a person from outside the medical profession to see what we cannot perceive ourselves. If only more physicians and veterinarians in leadership positions had the same vision of the future.

While many outstanding individuals positively impact the profession of veterinary medicine each day, Drs. Steele, Bradley, and Goeppinger provide the 2013 lens through which we can view the momentous difference that one person's contributions can make.

---

<sup>1</sup> James H. Steele, Pioneer in Veterinary Public Health, dies at 100. The New York Times, November 21, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Steele, James H., DVM, MPH, former (and first) US Assistant Surgeon General for Veterinary Affairs. Interview with Donald F. Smith, Cornell University, June 27, 2010 (Houston, TX).

<sup>3</sup> Aspros, Douglas (AVMA president, now past president), email to Donald F. Smith (Cornell University). 2013 July 25

<sup>4</sup> Smith, Donald F., Five Days in July: Catalyzing a New Wave of Women's Leadership in the AVMA. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*. July 29, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> The mission of the WVLDI is to "achieve leadership excellence in every sector of veterinary medicine that fully reflects the diversity of the profession and society."

<sup>6</sup> Smith, Donald F., New Veterinary College in Arizona Gains Momentum for Fall 2014 Opening. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*. May 7, 2013.

#### KEYWORDS:

Katherine H. Goeppinger  
James H. Steele  
Karen Bradley  
Veterinary Public Health  
Midwestern University  
Douglas Aspros  
Women's Veterinary Leadership Development Initiative  
Master of Public Health  
History of Veterinary Medicine  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
House of Delegates  
House Advisory Committee

#### TOPIC:

Miscellaneous

#### LEADING QUESTION:

What people had the greatest impact on veterinary medicine in 2013?

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr. Donald F. Smith, Dean Emeritus of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, had a passion for the value of the history of veterinary medicine as a gateway for understanding the present and the future of the profession.

---

Throughout his many professional roles from professor of surgery, to Department Chair of Clinical Sciences, Associate Dean of Education and of Academic Programs and Dean, he spearheaded changes in curriculum, clinical services, diagnostic services and more. He was a diplomat of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons and a member of the National Academy of Practices. Most recently he played a major role in increasing the role of women in veterinary leadership.

*Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine* is one of his projects where he was able to share his vast knowledge of the profession.